ATLAS

ADVENTURES INTO TERROR

NO. 13

10¢

DECEMBER

"THE HANDS OF DEATH!"

ALSO...

"THE MAN WHO TALKED TO RATS!"

"THE VISITOR!"

DON'T TRY TO OUTSMART THE DEVIL

BY STAN LEE AND CARMINE INFANTINO

AS I WALKED DOWN THE DARK STEPS TO MY UNDERGROUND DUNGEON, I WAS SCARED! BECAUSE I KNEW I WAS GOING TO DIE!
I HAD TO OPEN MY VAULT ONCE MORE BEFORE I MET DEATH!
I STOOD AMONG MY TREASURES AND LET THE GOLD COINS DROP THRU MY FINGERS...TREMBLING WITH DELIGHT AT THE FEEL OF THEM!
MINE! IT'S ALL MINE! NOBODY CAN EVER TAKE THIS WEALTH FROM ME!

BUT I KNEW I WAS KIDDING MYSELF! I COULDN'T KEEP MY TREASURE MUCH LONGER! I WAS TOO OLD... AND I WAS SICK! WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO MY GOLD WHEN I DIED?
DEATH! ONLY DEATH CAN CHEAT ME OF MY GOLD! BUT I WON'T LET IT! I'LL FIND SOME WAY TO DEFEAT EVEN DEATH!
I SLAMMED THE VAULT SHUT...
THERE ISN'T A MINUTE TO LOSE!
SLAM
AND WENT BACK UP THE STAIRS AS FAST AS MY WITHERED LEGS WOULD CARRY ME!
I'VE GOT A PLAN!! IT'LL WORK!! IT HAS TO WORK!
A FEW MINUTES LATER I WAS IN MY LIVING ROOM, CARRYING OUT THE FIRST PART OF MY PLAN TO DEFEAT DEATH!
HELLO, IGOR... THIS IS MURDOCK! I'VE GOT TO SEE YOU AT ONCE!
WITHOUT EVEN WAITING FOR HIS ANSWER, I PUT ON MY COAT AND HURRIED INTO THE STREET! A TAXI BROUGHT ME TO IGOR'S COTTAGE, RIGHT BEHIND THE LOCAL CEMETERY!
ARE YA SURE THIS IS THE PLACE YA WANT, MISTER?
YES, OF COURSE! GIVE ME MY CHANGE AND GET OUT OF HERE!
HEY, HOW ABOUT A TIP?
DON'T BE A FOOL! DO I LOOK LIKE A MAN WHO WOULD WASTE PRECIOUS MONEY ON THE LIKES OF YOU?
IGOR WAS WAITING FOR ME AS USUAL! HE WAS AN UGLY, DIRTY, SLIMY CREATURE, BUT THE ONLY ONE IN THE WORLD WHO COULD HELP ME!
AH, COME IN, MISTER MURDOCK! WHAT CAN IGOR DO FOR YOU TONIGHT?
LET'S GO INSIDE, YOU IDIOT!

IGOR, DO YOU STILL PRACTICE BLACK MAGIC BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON?
YES, MR. MURDOCK! IGOR KNOWS ALL OF THE DEVIL'S OWN RITES, AND SPELLS, AND INCANTATIONS!
THEN YOU MUST DO SOMETHING FOR ME... AND DO IT FAST!
WHAT IS IT, MR. MURDOCK?
YOU MUST USE YOUR BLACK MAGIC TO MAKE ME LIVE FOR-EVER!
NO... NO! THAT IS ONE SPELL I DARE NOT USE...
ONLY THE DEVIL HIM-SELF CAN PERFORM THAT KIND OF BLACK MAGIC!
THEN SUMMON THE DEVIL FOR ME! I'M NOT AFRAID!
NO... YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE ASKING! IF YOU MAKE A BARGAIN WITH THE DEVIL, YOU LOSE YOUR SOUL! YOU'LL... UGH!
FOOL! WHAT DO I CARE ABOUT MY WORTHLESS SOUL? IT IS MY GOLD I WANT TO KEEP! I MUSN'T DIE... I MUSTN'T LOSE MY GOLD!
NOW WILL YOU SUMMON THE DEVIL? WILL YOU? WILL YOU?
ARGHH-- YES... UGH... LET ME GO... OHHH-- I'LL DO IT!..

I STEPPED BACK TO CATCH MY BREATH! MY HEART WAS BEATING LIKE A TRIPHAMMER! I WAS GOING TO CHEAT DEATH! I KNEW IT! I FELT IT!
GIVE ME JUST A FEW MINUTES TO PREPARE THE RITUAL! IT ISN'T EASY TO SUMMON SATAN HIMSELF!
DON'T TAKE TOO LONG...OR I'LL THROTTLE YOU AGAIN!
IGOR STEPPED OUT OF HIS FILTHY SHACK AND MOTIONED ME TO FOLLOW!
COME!
WHERE ARE YOU LEADING ME, YOU UGLY DOLT?
IN ORDER TO SUMMON THE DEVIL, I MUST STAND OVER THE GRAVE OF AN EVIL MAN WHO HAS DIED! NOW MOVE BACK...WHILE I RECITE THE SATANIC CHANT!
AT LAST... AT LAST!!
AS IGOR BEGAN TO SAY THE MYSTIC WORDS, THE EARTH SEEMED TO RUMBLE AND THE NIGHT GREW EVEN DARKER! I WANTED TO SCREAM IN AGONY AT THE HORRIBLE SOUND OF THE DEVILISH INCANTATION.
SATANUS! BRUTANUS! FIRES BELOW! DEVILISH GLOW! TERRORS OF EVIL... HEAR ME, OH DEVIL...
SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A BLINDING FLASH WHICH BURNT THRU MY EYES UNTIL IT SCORCHED MY BRAIN ITSELF!
AND THEN, A DEEP THUNDEROUS ROAR WHICH MADE MY EARS RING WITH UNBEARABLE PAIN!
RRRRR!!
RRRR!
NEXT, A BURST OF SMOKE WHICH STILL CONTAINED THE ARID ODOR OF BRIMSTONE!
AND FINALLY, QUIET...THE UNNATURAL QUIETNESS OF DEATH...AND A LOOK OF AWE AND HORROR ON IGOR'S FACE!
HAIL, PRINCE OF EVIL!

AND THERE HE STOOD... SATAN, THE DEVIL! MORE HORRIBLE, MORE LOATHSOME, MORE DISGUSTING THAN I HAD DREAMT! BUT ONLY HE COULD BRING ME THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE!
WHO SUMMONS SATAN?

I HAVE SUMMONED YOU! I HAVE COME TO MAKE A BARGAIN WITH YOU!
AH, I LIKE TO MAKE BARGAINS WITH MORTALS! WHAT BARGAIN DO YOU WISH?

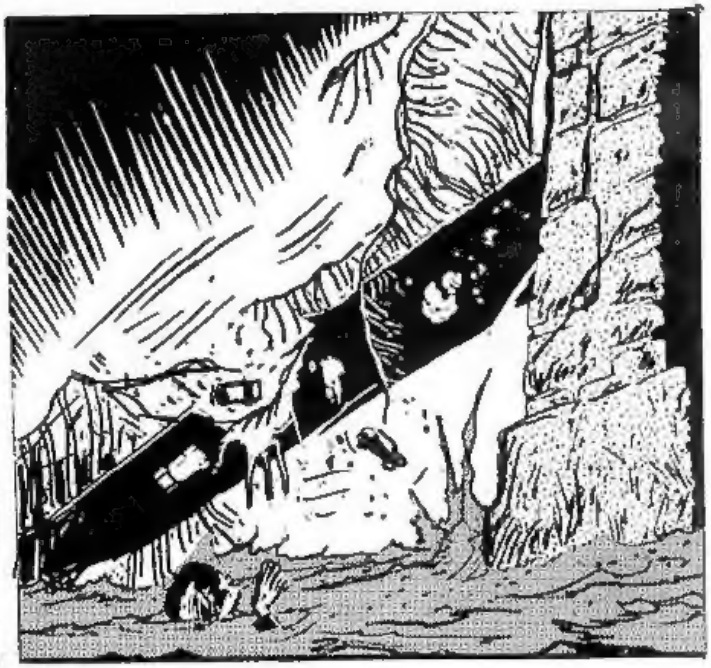
I WILL TRADE YOU MY SOUL, IF YOU WILL GIVE ME EVERLASTING LIFE IN RETURN!
WHY DO YOU WANT EVERLASTING LIFE?

BECAUSE I'M RICH! I'M ONE OF THE RICHEST MEN IN THE WORLD! ALL MY LIFE I'VE LABORED TO GATHER A FORTUNE IN GOLD... AND NOW I'VE GOT IT! I WON'T GIVE IT UP... NOT EVEN TO DEATH!

YOU FOOL!! AND ALL YOU CAN OFFER ME IN RETURN IS YOUR SOUL? HA HA! HA HA HA HA HA!
BUT... BUT I THOUGHT YOU WANTED SOULS DON'T-- DON'T LAUGH LIKE THAT! I'M AN OLD MAN... YOU MUST LET ME LIVE FOR-EVER!! YOU MUST!!

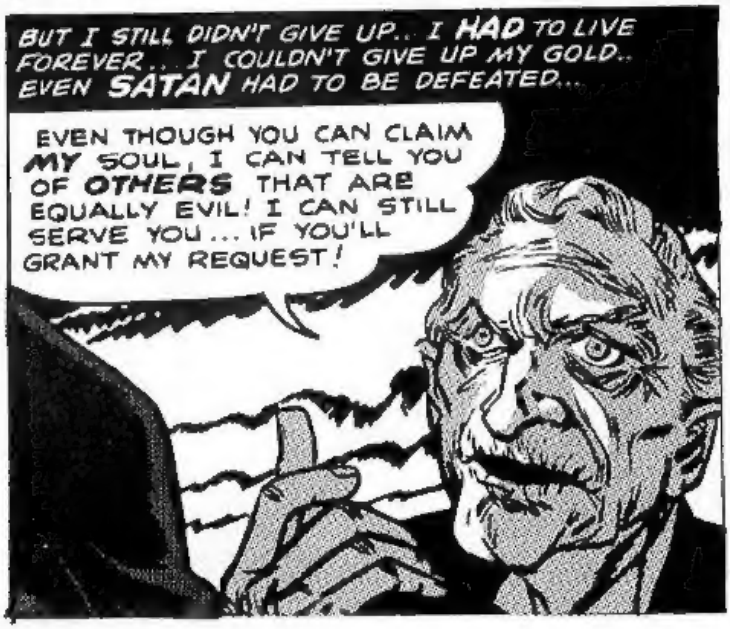
DON'T YOU REALIZE... I ALREADY OWN YOUR SOUL! EVERY EVIL DEED YOU'VE DONE ALL THRU YOUR LIFE HAS GIVEN ME THE RIGHT TO CLAIM YOUR SOUL WHEN YOU DIE!
NO! IT CAN'T BE! I'VE DONE NOTHING.. NOTHING!
NOTHING? HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE TIME YOUR FRIEND CARL INVENTED A NEW MACHINE..!
MURDOCK! LOOK! A NEW POWER TOOL! IT WILL MAKE ME RICH!
LET ME SEE, CARL!
IT IS WONDERFUL! WHERE... ARE THE PLANS?
THEY'RE SAFE! THEY'RE IN THE DRAWER OF MY WORK BENCH!
THAT NIGHT YOU STARTED A FIRE IN THE WORKSHOP... REMEMBER?
CARL WAS BURNED TO DEATH... BUT YOU ESCAPED.. WITH CARL'S PLANS!
HELP ME... HELP!
AND YOU MADE A FORTUNE OUT OF CARL'S INVENTION... THAT WAS WHEN I FIRST CLAIMED YOUR SOUL!
NO... NO... IT CAN'T BE!
BUT THERE WERE OTHER THINGS, MURDOCK, WHICH GAVE ME EVEN GREATER CLAIMS ON YOUR SOUL! DO YOU REMEMBER THE BRIDGE YOUR FIRM BUILT IN 1926?
MR. MURDOCK! THIS BRIDGE WON'T LAST A YEAR! YOU USED DEFECTIVE STEEL IN THE GIRDERS!
QUIET, YOU SPINELESS FOOL! YOU AND I ARE THE ONLY TWO WHO KNOW THAT!
AND NOW I'M THE ONLY ONE!
AIEEE!

YOU DIDN'T THINK I'D FORGET THAT LITTLE INCIDENT, DID YOU? BUT EVEN IF I DID... YOU FURNISHED ME WITH PLENTY MORE... LIKE THAT FATEFUL DAY, EIGHT MONTHS LATER...
WHAT'S THAT SOUND?
THE BRIDGE... IT'S FALLING!!
R-R-RUMBLE



YOU WEREN'T VERY UPSET BY WHAT HAD HAPPENED, WERE YOU? IN FACT, YOU DIDN'T LEAVE YOUR VAULT ALL THAT DAY...
THEY CAN'T BLAME IT ON ME! IT WAS AN ACCIDENT / THEY CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO ME... WHAT DO I CARE WHAT HAPPENS... AS LONG AS I HAVE MY GOLD?

DO YOU WANT TO HEAR SOME OF THE OTHER INCIDENTS WHICH GIVE ME ABSOLUTE CLAIM UPON YOUR EVIL SOUL?
NO... NO... NO MORE!!
HE'S HEARD ENOUGH!

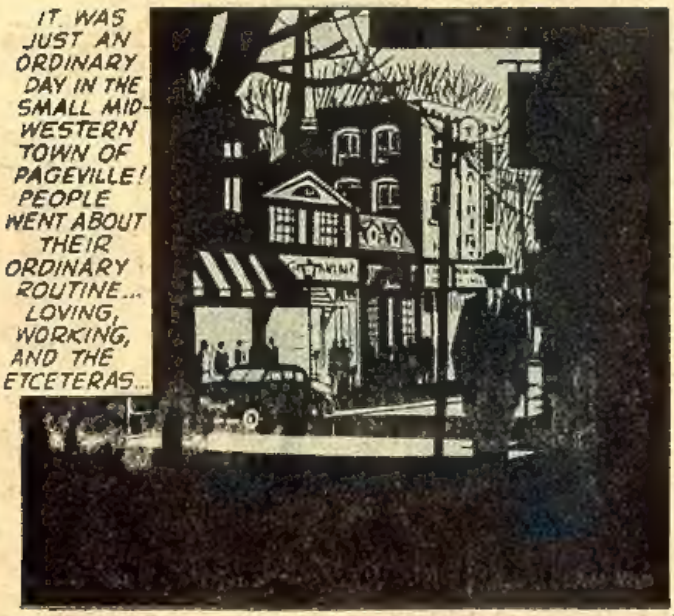

BUT I STILL DIDN'T GIVE UP.. I HAD TO LIVE FOREVER... I COULDN'T GIVE UP MY GOLD.. EVEN SATAN HAD TO BE DEFEATED...
EVEN THOUGH YOU CAN CLAIM MY SOUL, I CAN TELL YOU OF OTHERS THAT ARE EQUALLY EVIL! I CAN STILL SERVE YOU... IF YOU'LL GRANT MY REQUEST!

I NEED NO HELP FROM A MISERABLE MORTAL LIKE YOU... BUT I WILL GRANT YOUR REQUEST, IF YOU WILL ME YOUR SOUL RIGHT NOW... BEFORE DEATH!
OH YES... YES! I'LL DO ANYTHING!!

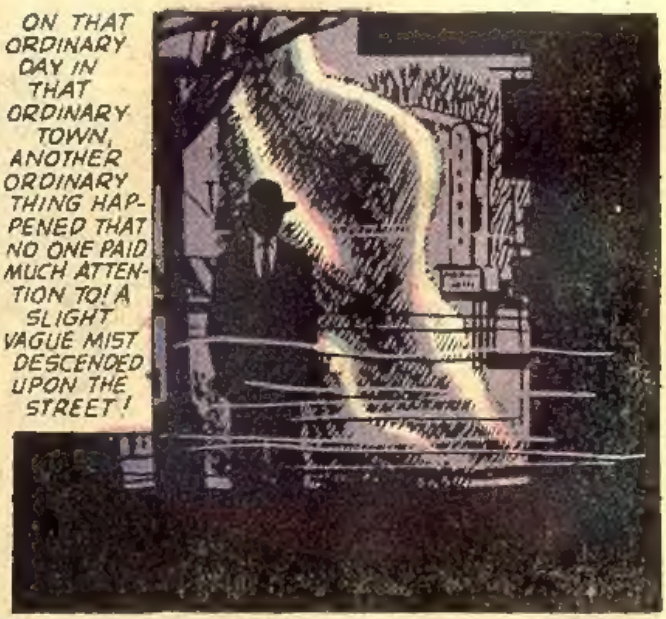
COME, LIE DOWN IN THIS COFFIN... AND I WILL BEGIN THE RITES!
SEE? I TOLD YOU I'D WIN!
WE'LL SEE... WE'LL SEE!
SOUL WITHOUT MERIT, SATAN WILL TEAR IT!!
THE SHOCK OF A MILLION VOLTS OF ELECTRICITY TORE AT MY INSIDES... THEN I FELT HOLLOW... NUMB... EMPTY... AND I KNEW THAT MY SOUL BELONGED TO
SATAN!!
NOW STATE YOUR REQUEST AND IT WILL BE GRANTED!
I WANT THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE! LET MY HEART NEVER STOP BEATING!
THE NEXT THING I KNEW, THE COFFIN LID WAS SNAPPED SHUT ABOVE ME... AND I HEARD NO SOUND SAVE THAT OF SATANIC LAUGHTER FROM ABOVE...
YOUR REQUEST IS GRANTED! YOUR HEART WILL NEVER STOP BEATING! HA HA HA HA!
HA HA
SLAM!
AND I'M AFRAID THE DEVIL...
THUD
THUMP
THUD
THUD THUMP
THUMP
...WAS RIGHT!
FINIS

The VISITOR

IT WAS JUST AN ORDINARY DAY IN THE SMALL MID-WESTERN TOWN OF PAGEVILLE! PEOPLE WENT ABOUT THEIR ORDINARY ROUTINE... LOVING, WORKING, AND THE ETCETERAS...



ON THAT ORDINARY DAY IN THAT ORDINARY TOWN, ANOTHER ORDINARY THING HAPPENED THAT NO ONE PAID MUCH ATTENTION TO! A SLIGHT VAGUE MIST DESCENDED UPON THE STREET!



ORDINARY? YES.. EXCEPT FOR ONE MINOR DETAIL ONE YOU WOULD BARELY NOTICE UNLESS YOU WERE MEANT TO! BUT IN THE HUSTLE BUSTLE OF THE STREET SCENE, WHO WOULD NOTE THE ADDITION OF ANOTHER PERSON .. A PERSON WHO SEEMED TO STEP OUT OF THE MIST..?

UNLESS UNLESS YOU WERE A CERTAIN MAN WITH MURDER IN HIS HEART..IN THIS CASE, A GANGSTER ABOUT TO RUB OUT A COMPETITOR TO TAKE OVER NEW TERRITORY!

ALL I GOTTA DO IS WAIT! NEMO COMES BY HERE EVERY DAY AT THIS TIME ALWAYS BY THIS ALLEY!

SUDDENLY.. A SHAPE APPEARED BESIDE HIM..

HUH? WHO THE BLAZES?..

NEMO.. YOU YOU YOU'RE WISE TO ME! HOW DID YOU--??

NO, NEMO! I WASN'T AFTER YOU! HONEST, NEMO -- HONEST!

BUT IF THE FLEEING, TERRIFIED KILLER HAD DARED TO LOOK BACK, HE WOULD HAVE SEEN SOMETHING EVEN MORE TERRIFYING THAN NEMO! THE SHAPE DISSOLVED IN A MIST!

NO, YOU WOULDN'T NOTICE...UNLESS...UNLESS YOU WERE ANOTHER BUSINESSMAN, ABOUT TO DEFRAUD HIS PARTNER!

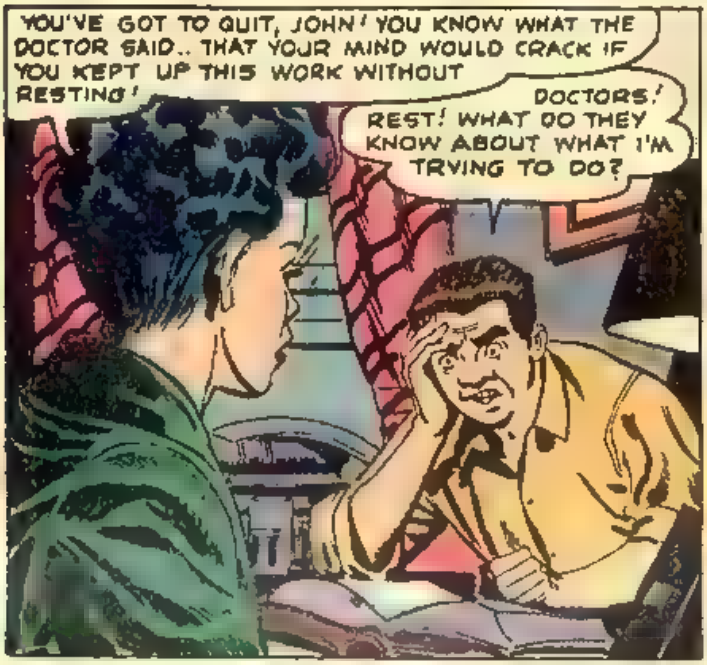
ALL THE BUSINESS PROFITS.. HERE, IN THIS VAULT! I'VE GOT AN AIR-LINE TICKET TO MEXICO! I'M ALL SET TO CLEAR OUT AND LEAVE ANDREW HOLDING THE BAG..!

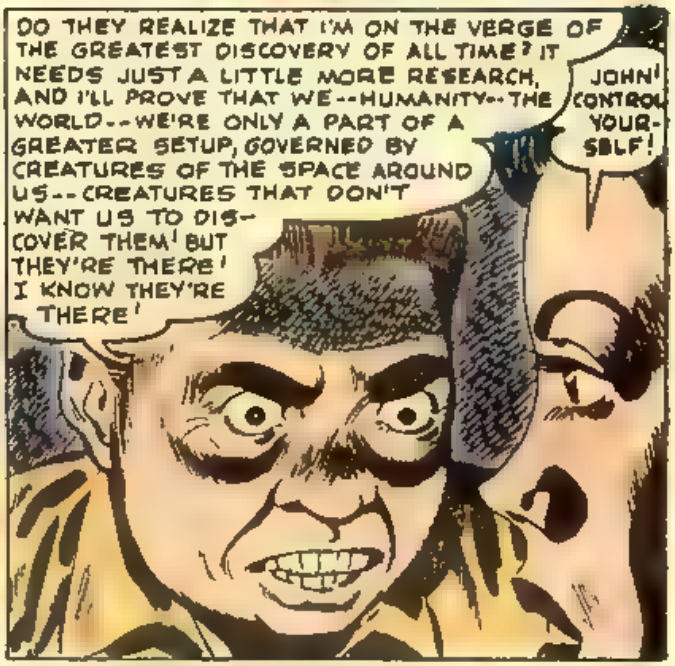
BUT WHO WOULD PAY ATTENTION TO A MIST DRIFTING IN THRU AN OPEN WINDOW ?
ONE MORE TURN TO THE RIGHT!
A MIST OUT OF WHICH STEPPED A SHAPE
ANDREW!
HEH! HEH! ER DIDN'T EXPECT YOU OLD MAN! I...ER... DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT ANDREW! I--I DIDN'T MEAN TO TAKE THE MONEY! ANDREW! DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT!
A CRASH OF GLASS... A SCREAM... AND ALL THAT WAS LEFT WAS A DRIFTING MIST...
AAAAAAAAA!
..HARDLY NOTICEABLE. .UNLESS UNLESS YOU WERE A PETTY THIEF.. ABOUT TO ROB A BLIND MAN'S CUP !
MULVANEY! THE COP! LEMME OUTTA HERE!
UNLESS... YOU WERE AN OLD MAN, AND A PASSING WIND BROUGHT YOU WARMTH.
UNLESS YOU LIVED IN DARK, SHADOWED STREETS AND WONDERED THAT A MIST COULD BRING THE SUN TO LONG-DARKENED CORNERS

YES, IF YOU SAID THAT THIS OBJECT, WHATEVER IT WAS, WAS A CREATURE OF GOOD, YOU WOULD BE RIGHT! SO IT DRIFTED ON IN THE NIGHT. .

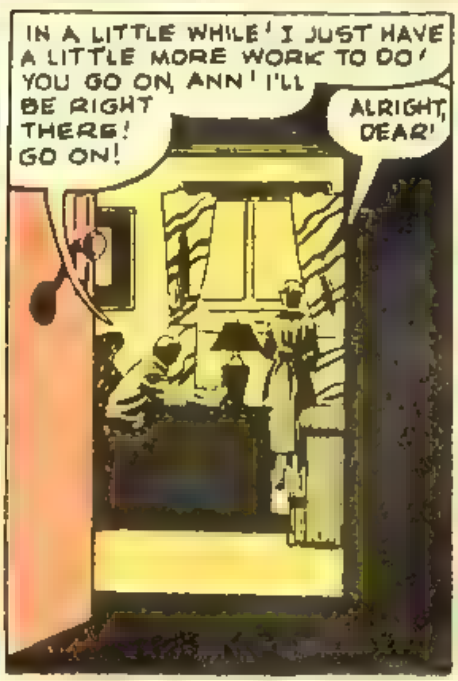
A MIST NO MORE, NO LESS . UNLESS ... UNLESS.

JOHN! IT'S LATE! PLEASE STOP WORKING AND COME TO BED!
I CAN'T.. NOT YET!


YOU'VE GOT TO QUIT, JOHN! YOU KNOW WHAT THE DOCTOR SAID.. THAT YOUR MIND WOULD CRACK IF YOU KEPT UP THIS WORK WITHOUT RESTING!
DOCTORS! REST! WHAT DO THEY KNOW ABOUT WHAT I'M TRYING TO DO?


DO THEY REALIZE THAT I'M ON THE VERGE OF THE GREATEST DISCOVERY OF ALL TIME? IT NEEDS JUST A LITTLE MORE RESEARCH, AND I'LL PROVE THAT WE--HUMANITY--THE WORLD--WE'RE ONLY A PART OF A GREATER SETUP, GOVERNED BY CREATURES OF THE SPACE AROUND US--CREATURES THAT DON'T WANT US TO DISCOVER THEM! BUT THEY'RE THERE! I KNOW THEY'RE THERE!
JOHN! CONTROL YOURSELF!

HOW CAN I? THEY'RE THERE EVERY SECOND, WATCHING US!. AND THEY DON'T WANT US TO KNOW ABOUT THEM, ANN! BUT I'M GOING TO PROVE IT-- AND SOON! SOON!
YOU'VE GOT TO COME TO BED, JOHN!


IN A LITTLE WHILE! I JUST HAVE A LITTLE MORE WORK TO DO! YOU GO ON, ANN! I'LL BE RIGHT THERE! GO ON!
ALRIGHT, DEAR!

FIRST I'LL CLOSE YOUR WINDOW! THERE'S A MIST COMING IN!

A MIST, DID SHE SAY? YES, SHE WAS A LOVING WIFE, WORRIED ABOUT HER HUSBAND'S HEALTH AND HIS MIND...
JOHN, IF WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE .. IF THERE ARE CREATURES LIKE THAT AND THEY DON'T WANT US TO KNOW ABOUT THEM, SHOULDN'T YOU LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE?
GO TO BED, ANN! YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT THESE THINGS! LEAVE ME ALONE!
SO HIS WIFE LEFT HIM ALONE! ALONE..?
A SECOND OF STILLNESS IN THE NIGHT THEN A FEAR-CRACKED VOICE CROAKED IN SHEER, UTTER HORROR
I WAS RIGHT! I WAS RIGHT AAGGHH!
JOHN! JOHN!
AND THAT'S HOW SHE FOUND HIM, STARING AT NOTHINGNESS WITH VACANT EYES, HIS MIND CRACKED, SAYING OVER AND OVER AND OVER . AS HE WOULD CONTINUE TO DO THE REST OF HIS LIFE THE SAME MEANINGLESS WORDS ..
I WAS RIGHT! I WAS RIGHT!
MY POOR DARLING..IT'S HAPPENED! HIS MIND IS GONE!
THE MIST? AS MISTS WILL DO, IT BROKE UP AND VANISHED! THE VISITOR WAS GONE, AND THIS WAS
THE END

THE HANDS OF DEATH

IT WAS A PEACEFUL, SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD LIKE MANY OTHERS,. QUIET, ORDINARY., UNTIL.

The Daily Chronicle
KILLER STRIKES
MYSTERIOUS STRANGLER MURDERS WIFE OF MIDVILLE LABORER! LEAVES NO CLUES! POLICE SAY THE MURDERER HAD HANDS OF IRON! WARN ALL WOMEN TO STAY OFF STREETS AFTER DARK!

TRAGEDY STRUCK AT MIDVILLE THAT NIGHT, LEAVING A GRIEF-STRICKEN HUSBAND AND CHILDREN! THE OTHER WOMEN OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD SHIVERED BEHIND LOCKED WINDOWS! SOMEWHERE, OUT IN THE NIGHT, A KILLER WAS ON THE PROWL!

YES, TRAGEDY FOR A PLACE LIKE MIDVILLE. BUT IN THE CITY ROOM OF THE BIG TOWN STANDARD-GAZETTE IT WAS JUST ANOTHER STORY

YOU DID A GOOD JOB HANDLING THE WIRE STORY ON THE MIDVILLE STRANGLER, HANLOW! HOW'D YOU LIKE TO GO OUT THERE AND DO IT DIRECT?

IF YOU SAY SO, CHIEF... ALTHOUGH I DON'T LIKE TO BE NEAR ANY-PLACE WHERE THE STRANGLER IS!

IF I KNOW YOU, BABY, HE'LL HAVE TO WATCH OUT FOR YOU!

AND THAT'S HOW IT WAS THAT REPORTER SANDRA HANLOW FOUND HERSELF DRIVING OUT TO MIDVILLE...

BETTER STEP ON IT! IT'S GETTING DARK AND I DON'T WANT TO GET THERE TOO LATE!

MIDVILLE 5 MI.

DAWGONE! I WAS IN SUCH A HURRY TO GET HERE, I FORGOT TO FILL UP ON GAS AND NOW I'M EMPTY! WHAT A DUMB THING TO DO!

ATTENTION! WOMEN ARE WARNED! GET OFF ALL STREETS AND ROADS!

AND IT'S DARK!

THE STRANGLER IS STILL LOOSE! GET INDOORS AND DON'T ADMIT ANY STRANGERS!

WELL, I'M NOT STAYING HERE... NOT WITH A KILL-MAD STRANGLER IN THESE PARTS! HE COULD BE ANY PLACE AROUND HERE! MAYBE I CAN CALL A GAS STATION FROM THAT HOUSE!

LET ME IN, PLEASE!

NO! NO! I'M AN OLD WOMAN LIVING ALONE, AND THE RADIO SAID NOT TO LET IN ANY STRANGERS! GO AWAY! GO AWAY!

KNOCK KNOCK KNO

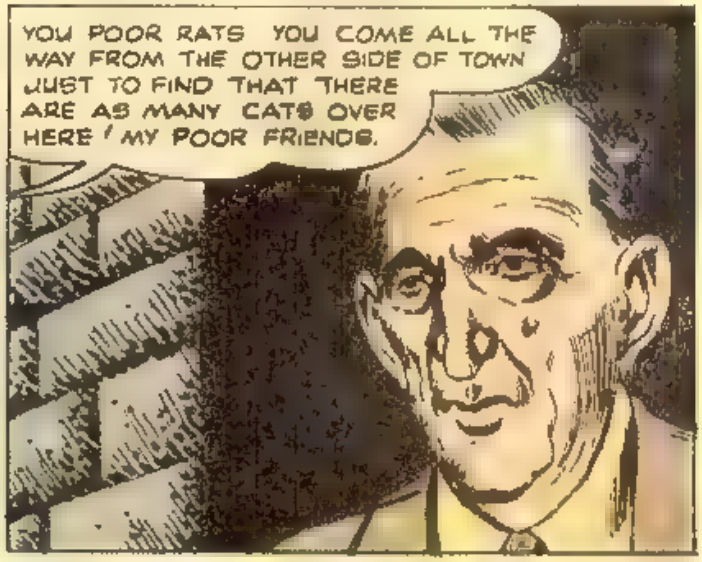
BUT I'M A WOMAN, TOO! I'M NOT THE STRANGLER! LISTEN, MY CAR... I NEED GAS.. JUST LET ME CALL THE GAS STATION! PLEASE LET ME IN! I'M ALL ALONE OUT HERE! THE KILLER WILL GET ME IF YOU DON'T LET ME IN!
WELL...YOU SOUND LIKE A GIRL...ALL RIGHT! BUT I'M TAKING AN AWFUL CHANCE!
AH! I'M GLAD YOU CAME, MY DEAR! I WAS LONELY... AND AFRAID!
I'M SCARED STIFF AND I'LL GET OUT OF HERE AS SOON AS I CALL THE GAS STATION...
NO! DON'T USE THE PHONE! IT'S T S OUT OF ORDER
MY GOODNESS! THEN I'LL HAVE TO STAY HERE! LET'S BARRICADE THAT DOOR! A MAN COULD EASILY BREAK THROUGH... WHY...
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
YOU, . YOU HAVEN'T LOCKED IT! THE LATCH IS OFF!
THAT'S RIGHT! IT'S MY HOUSE! I CAN DO WHAT I WANT!
BUT... BUT... THE STRANGLER.. HE CAN GET IN.
THAT'S TRUE...
WHAT ELSE IS TRUE, SANDRA? WHAT DO YOU SEE? WHY DO YOUR EYES STARE SO? THAT ARM..HEAVY-MUSCLED, HAIRY... IT'S THE ARM OF A MAN!

AS A WOMAN, SANDRA WAS FRIGHTENED. BUT AS A REPORTER SHE KEPT HER HEAD, TRIED TO REMAIN COOL TRIED TO THINK.
OF COURSE,, IT'S YOUR HOUSE, ISN'T IT? YOU. YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU LIKE!
THAT'S RIGHT! I CAN DO WHAT I LIKE!
IT'S A MAN... DISGUISED AS A WOMAN! IT'S THE STRANGLER! LOOK AT THOSE HANDS! HEAVY, STRONG! GNARLED! THEY'RE THE HANDS OF THE KILLER! BUT I MUSTN'T LOSE MY HEAD! I'VE GOT TO HUMOR HIM... DON'T LET HIM SUSPECT THAT I KNOW... UNTIL I CAN GET AWAY FROM HERE!
I... I DON'T THINK I'LL STAY AFTER ALL! I'LL WALK ON TO THE GARAGE AND TAKE MY CHANCES!
NO!
THE . THE PHONE... I'LL BET IT'S WORKING.. I'LL TAKE A TRY...
I TOLD YOU... IT'S NOT WORKING...
YOU... YOU'RE A MAN! YOU'RE THE STRANGLER! THOSE HANDS! THOSE HANDS!
GO ON! SCREAM!
AAAAAEEEEEHHHHH! HELP!!!
HELP! HELP! HELP!
T.V. REPAIR SERVICE

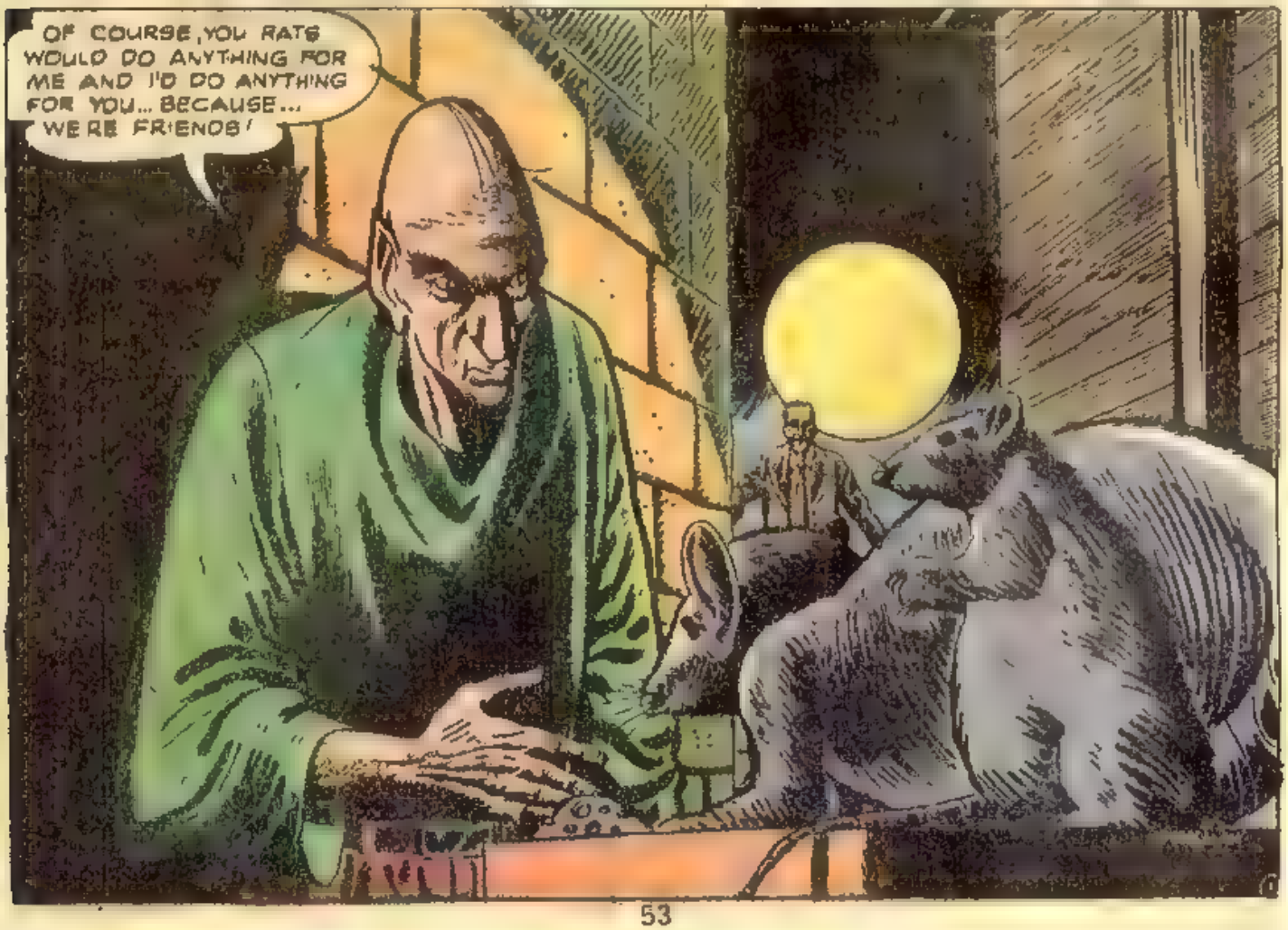
YOUNG BOBBY GERARD, A TELEVISION MECHANIC OUT ON A CALL, HEARD THE SCREAM! WITHOUT HESITATING A SECOND HE LEAPED OUT OF HIS TRUCK, RAN TOWARD THE HOUSE AND HURLED HIMSELF AGAINST THE DOOR!
KA-RASH
EEEH! HELP ME! HELP ME! THAT PERSON! IT'S THE...
AH! TWO WOMEN THIS TIME!
WHAT WHAT DID YOU SAY?
TWO WOMEN... TWO WOMEN TO KILL! I'LL TAKE YOU FIRST!
AAAEEEH!
NO! TAKE ME!
ARAAAGH!
THERE! THAT'LL HOLD THE MURDERING DOG TILL THE POLICE GET HERE! FIGURED HE'D BE PROWLING TONIGHT.. THAT'S WHY I WAS HERE... DRESSED AS A WOMAN THAT'S WHY I WANTED YOU TO SCREAM... TO BRING HIM IN IF HE WAS AROUND! SORRY I HAD TO SCARE YOU LIKE THAT...
BUT.. WHO ARE YOU? THOSE HANDS..
LABORER'S HANDS, MISS! YOU SEE, THAT WAS MY WIFE HE KILLED!
THE END

OUR STORY STARTS AT AN HOUR WHEN THE STREETS ARE USUALLY DESERTED! THE LONELY CITY SLEEPS .. BUT ONE RESTLESS SOUL WANDERS ALONG THE WATERFRONT ..

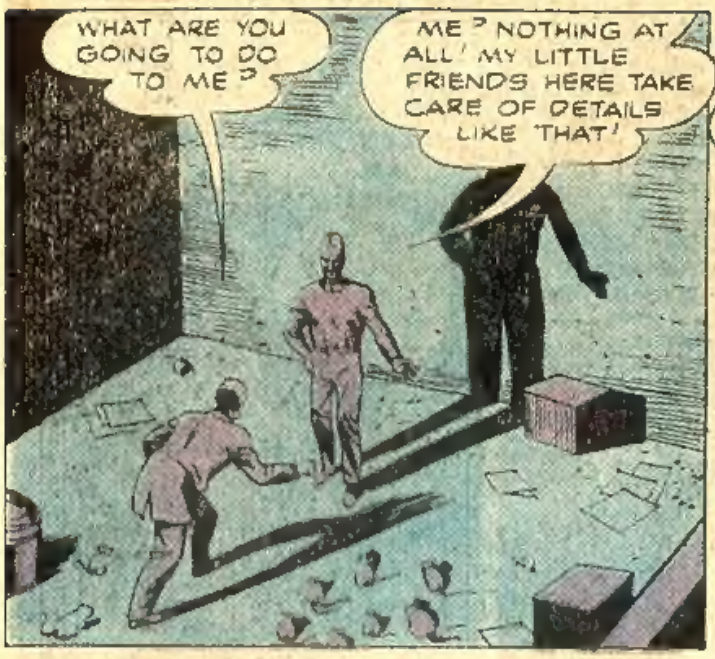
YES, PAUL CRANDALL HAS A PROBLEM ON HIS MIND, AND HIS THOUGHTS ARE BROKEN ONLY BY THE SOUND OF A STRANGE VOICE ...


YOU POOR RATS YOU COME ALL THE WAY FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN JUST TO FIND THAT THERE ARE AS MANY CATS OVER HERE! MY POOR FRIENDS.

THE MAN WHO TALKED TO RATS!



HEY, THIS GUY'S REALLY NUTS! HE TALKS TO RATS LIKE HE THOUGHT THEY UNDERSTOOD HIM... THE GUY'S LOONY!
AND THOSE RATS, THEY JUST SIT THERE LIKE THEY WAS LISTENING TO HIM... BOY I'D BETTER BEAT IT! NO SENSE HANGING AROUND A GUY LIKE HIM! NO TELLING WHAT HE MIGHT DO IF...
HEY, YOU! HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN STANDING THERE? WHAT'D YOU HEAR?
NOTHING! I WAS JUST PASSING BY...
PASSING BY, EH? GET HIM... DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY!
NO! NO! I WASN'T DOING ANYTHING!
CALL THEM OFF! THEY'LL TEAR ME TO PIECES! I'LL GIVE YOU ANYTHING!
I'M AFRAID IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU HEARD ME TALKING TO MY LITTLE PETS HERE, SO YOU KNOW TOO MUCH TO LIVE!



BUT THAT'S MURDER! YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH MURDERING ME!
HA! THAT'S A LAUGH! TELL ME, MISTER, DID YOU EVER HEAR OF A BUNCH OF RATS BEING SENT UP FOR MURDER?

THERE IS A DEEP HUNGER IN THE RATS' EYES...

AS THEY COME CLOSER TO THEIR PREY...

WAITING FOR THE FINAL SIGNAL FROM THEIR MASTER...

WAITING TO STRIKE...

SUDDENLY, IN A LAST DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO WARD OFF DEATH, PAUL CRANDALL GETS AN IDEA...

WAIT! STOP! CALL THEM OFF! I'VE GOT AN IDEA! A BUSINESS DEAL! MAKE THEM STOP COMING TOWARD ME!
A DEAL? WHAT KIND OF A DEAL COULD YOU MAKE WITH ME?

WELL NOW, THAT SEEMS A FAIR ENOUGH DEAL... YOU JUST SHOW ME THE HOUSE WHERE HE LIVES AND I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST!
I...I KNEW YOU'D SEE THINGS MY WAY!

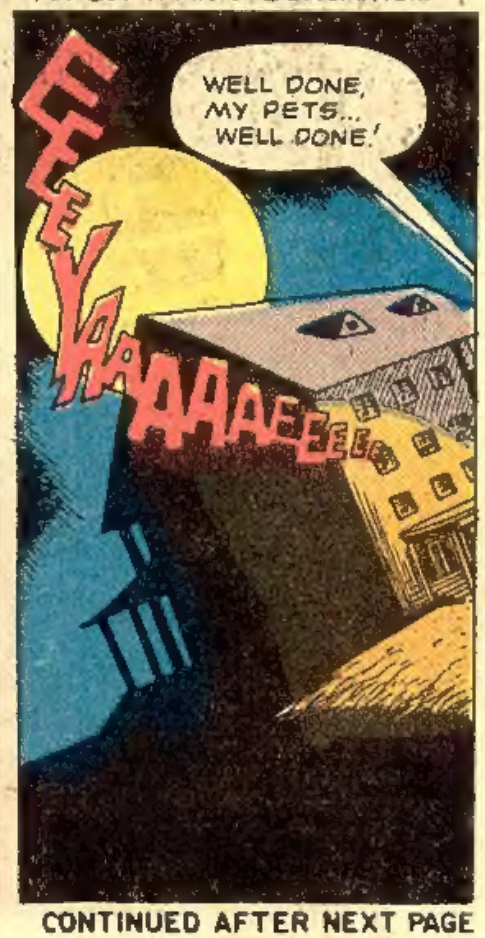
PAUL CRANDALL LEADS HIS NEW ACCOMPLICE TO THE ANCIENT ESTATE OF HIS UNCLE, AND GIVES HIM THE INFORMATION HE NEEDS...

HE SLEEPS IN THE THIRD ROOM FROM THE LEFT ON THE SECOND FLOOR! THERE'S NO ONE ELSE IN THE HOUSE TONIGHT! I JUST CAME FROM THERE...
AND DON'T FORGET OUR BARGAIN! YOU SAID...ANY FEE!

THE STRANGER STANDS ALONE BEFORE THE MUSTY, OLD HOUSE, AND THEN...

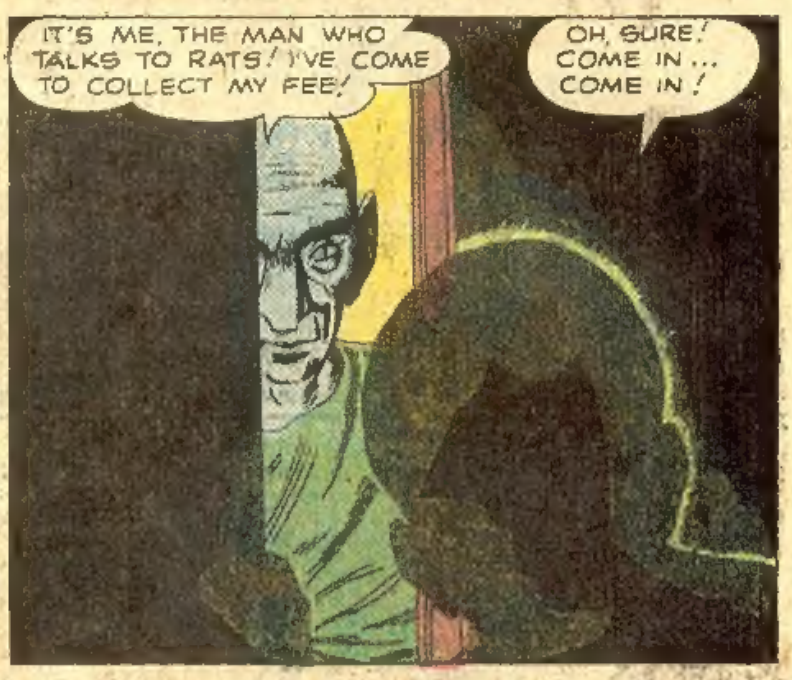
AT THE ORDER OF THEIR FRIEND AND MASTER...THE SQUEALING RATS SWARM IN THRU THE WINDOWS...

AND A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE SILENT NIGHT IS PIERCED WITH AN OLD MAN'S SCREAMS...



CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

WITHIN TWO WEEKS, THE OLD MAN IS BURIED AND THE INHERITANCE GOES TO PAUL CRANDALL IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WILL...



YES, SIR, WITH ME A BARGAIN IS A BARGAIN! NOW TELL ME... WHAT IS IT YOU WANT?
I DON'T WANT MONEY OR JEWELS OR YOUR PRECIOUS ESTATE... ALL I WANT IS...